

# Start Here: Read Boston Maps as Historical Sources

## Plan the map inquiry

Teach students to separate what a source shows or says from what they infer. They compare selected Boston map details from 1775 and 1883, then use a legislative report for a limited explanation of Back Bay filling work. Use this supplement within local history or geography teaching.

Fit: grades 6–8 where students are ready to connect several sources, explain a comparison, and qualify a claim. All grades use the same core tasks. More experienced readers can examine perspective and evidence gaps in the extension. Choose by prerequisites and local course goals.

- Students need to locate a printed label, distinguish streets from bounded areas using labels and line patterns, order years, and explain a claim with a source detail. No prior Boston history is required.
- Supply pencils and the selected printed pages or accessible digital copies. Allow zooming or a verbal response if helpful. Maps have small historical lettering; check visibility before use.
- Read the Teacher Guide before handing out tasks. Keep teacher answers separate. Give only the student materials needed for the selected route.

| Teaching opportunity                 | Planning estimate  |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Lesson 1: observe and compare        | 35–45 minutes      |
| Lesson 2: combine a report with maps | 35–45 minutes      |
| Independent check                    | 10–15 minutes      |
| Focused response practice            | 10–20 minutes      |
| Later check or application           | 10–15 minutes each |

Times are teacher planning estimates. Student pace, map access and discussion may change them.

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## Choose the next page

- Begin with Lessons and Practice. Lesson 1 uses only the Common-area details. Model one observation, then let students make and explain their own comparison. Lesson 2 adds the report and a familiar-source explanation.
- After teaching, use the Independent Check: Mill Pond Area. It changes the crop and question while retaining the original maps. Do not show its answers or the larger maps first if you want an independent response to that detail.
- Use the Teacher Guide to read the response by component: source reading, anchor matching, comparison, evidence limits and report use. Choose Continue Practice, Clarify the Source, Reteach Observe and Infer, or Extend Source Perspectives for the actual need.
- After selected practice, use the Follow-up Check: South of Essex Street. Save its crops and prompts until then. It offers a later response to a different area, not an unrelated unseen map.
- Use Apply Source Reading for a short public-history caption. It reuses documented teaching sources and is practice applying the method.
- The Source and Reading Supports give source records, vocabulary, and neutral alternative descriptions. The Planning Record helps you note supports and choose another teaching move locally.

Showing the complete original maps, later crops, explanations or answers changes what a later response can tell you. If students have seen these, treat the task as supported or familiar practice and note that exposure. Shared map titles and methods alone are expected; a new crop does not make the whole source new.

The collection offers evidence for a next teaching decision on these tasks. It does not assign scores, placement, mastery or a diagnosis. Keep any classroom notes under your usual local procedures; the materials require no account or submission of student information.